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Hardiman's efforts to prevent poisoning, allow health-insurance options, and strengthen downtowns and marriages head to governor

LANSING – Four bills sponsored by Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, passed the Legislature on Thursday and now are before the governor for consideration. Hardiman sponsored Senate Bill 756, which deals with preventing lead poisoning; SB 1150, which would foster more flexibility in the health-insurance options of employers; SB 963, which aims to strengthen marriages; and SB 1202, which would create tax-increment financing districts for historic areas.

“This legislation helps ensure Michigan children won’t endure the mental and developmental disabilities that lead poisoning causes,” Hardiman said of SB 756. “Although lead-based paint was banned in 1978, children who live in older homes, especially those in poorer neighborhoods, are often at risk from paint chips still flaking off the walls.”

The lead-poisoning package that Hardiman’s bill joined in also requires laboratories that perform tests on lead levels in blood report the findings to the Community Health Department. It also prohibits landlords from knowingly renting or leasing with lead-paint hazards.

As for the health-insurance flexibility bill, Hardiman’s legislation would allow more options for health-maintenance organizations to offer health-care benefits.

“Health care is one of the major costs any employer encounters,” Hardiman said. “Employers need more options to offer at least basic coverage instead of dropping insurance totally because of skyrocketing health-care costs. I believe my legislation increases flexibility, allowing additional businesses to offer some level of coverage to their employees.”

The senator also joined a bipartisan group of lawmakers who introduced a legislative package designed to help communities revitalize, improve and create incentives for their central business and residential districts, initiate new growth and create job opportunities. Hardiman sponsored SB 1202 that would allow the creation of tax-increment financing district for historic areas. Such districts capture property taxes for the district authority to make improvements to the area.

Hardiman also joined in the Legislature’s marriage-protection package, which focuses on trying to preserve marriages by encouraging premarital education or counseling, allowing a retired clergy member to continue to legally offer marriage counseling, providing a marriage preservation tax credit, and promoting divorce-effects education programs.

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The senator's bill would require couples to tell clerks whether they have received the required premarital-education program before getting a marriage license. If the program isn't taken by the couple, a marriage license will be issued after 28 days instead of three.

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